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**'Lefty' looks at longtime friends**

**Beverly native's independent movie to debut Friday night**

Comments

July 23, 2009

BY **STEVE METSCH**, Staff Writer

Todd Looby, who grew up in Chicago's Beverly community, brings the neighborhood to the big screen with his second movie.

"Lefty" will premiere at the Gene Siskel Film Center at 8:15 p.m Friday. Other showings are set for 8:15 p.m. Tuesday and July 30.

**'LEFTY'**

**When:** 8:15 p.m. Friday for the Chicago premiere.

Additional 8:15 p.m. screenings will take place on Tuesday and July 30.

**Where:** Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State St., Chicago.

**Tickets:** \$10 for general admission, \$7 students.

**Phone:** (312) 846-2600.

**Web:** [siskelfilmcenter.org](http://siskelfilmcenter.org), [obrigadoproductions.com](http://obrigadoproductions.com).

**Etc.:** Obrigado Productions presents "Lefty," which is written and directed by Todd Looby.

The cast includes iO players, Second City alumni, newcomers, Screen Actors Guild actors and what is billed as Chicago's best indie rock.

• "Lefty" is Looby's second movie.

His first film, "The Site," came out in 2007.

If that is not pure Chicago, nothing is.

The Beverly kid laughed at that comment. A little Windy City clout may have been nice with production costs.

Looby said his independent movie is not a low-budget production "but, first and foremost, a no-budget production."

Looby, who turns 34 on Wednesday, is a 1993 graduate of Mount Carmel High School in Chicago.

He and his wife, Monica Desmond, are living with his parents, Tom and Mary, in the 10000 block of Artesian Avenue.

The surrounding neighborhood and the high school are featured in various scenes in the movie. So is the South Side Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade and even Looby's dog, Burt.

"Yes, there's a lot in common with my life and my upbringing," Looby said.

The plot, however, is fictional.

"Lefty," which recently was shown at the Iowa Independent Film Festival in Clear Lake and won best feature, is about two longtime friends.

One has served with the military in Afghanistan and is home for the first time since 2001. The other is home from Colorado for the first time in 13 years.

"Danny comes home (from Colorado) because he thinks he's seriously ill with cancer," Looby said.

"He's got no insurance, so his best idea was to come home and get hooked up with a city job with help from his old man, who is a retired cop."

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"Independent these days means anything less than \$10 million. We operated c

"When you undertake something like that, there will be some problems. You use every connection you have to get it done.

"If you can't hire anyone, you've got to try to get it done quickly."

Speed is of the essence when folks work for free, Looby said.

The movie, he added, is "essentially about freedom and finding your true self."

And the characters are trying to find some control of their lives, which may seem to be spinning out of control.

"It's a dichotomy," Looby said.

"We have this soldier who's been risking his life and is on the verge of death every day. And we have this guy who's been floating around Colorado and he's sick.

"Of the two in the film, he's the one who's more screwed up."

Looby paused when asked if the film is as serious as it sounds.

"Although it has a very heavy thematic content, when you put a bunch of guys from Beverly in a bar ... I've written some lines that have comedic effect and a lot of the guys improvised, making it light and engaging," he said.

"The first act is very light and funny as they come back and reconnect with each other. There's a lot of humor with the guys hanging around the neighborhood."

Dinger's, a neighborhood bar on Western Avenue, was used for a few scenes.

The 2007 South Side Irish St. Patrick's Day Parade is also featured in the movie. So are some parades from the 1980s by using vintage home movies.

South Side comedian and actor Mike Houlihan, whose show "Goin' East on Ashland" was a big hit, is featured in the movie as the former Chicago cop.

Houlihan, Looby, Thomas Madden, who plays the character returning from Colorado, and actor Bill Phelan are all Mount Carmel grads and enjoyed seeing the old school again.

"I just called the school and asked if we could use it for a few hours on a Saturday afternoon," Looby said.

In the end, he is pleased with the movie. But, like any writer-director, nothing is perfect.

"Of course, there are things I wish we did better," Looby said.

"It shows for the first time next Friday, and I'm still deciding to cut this or that scene."

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